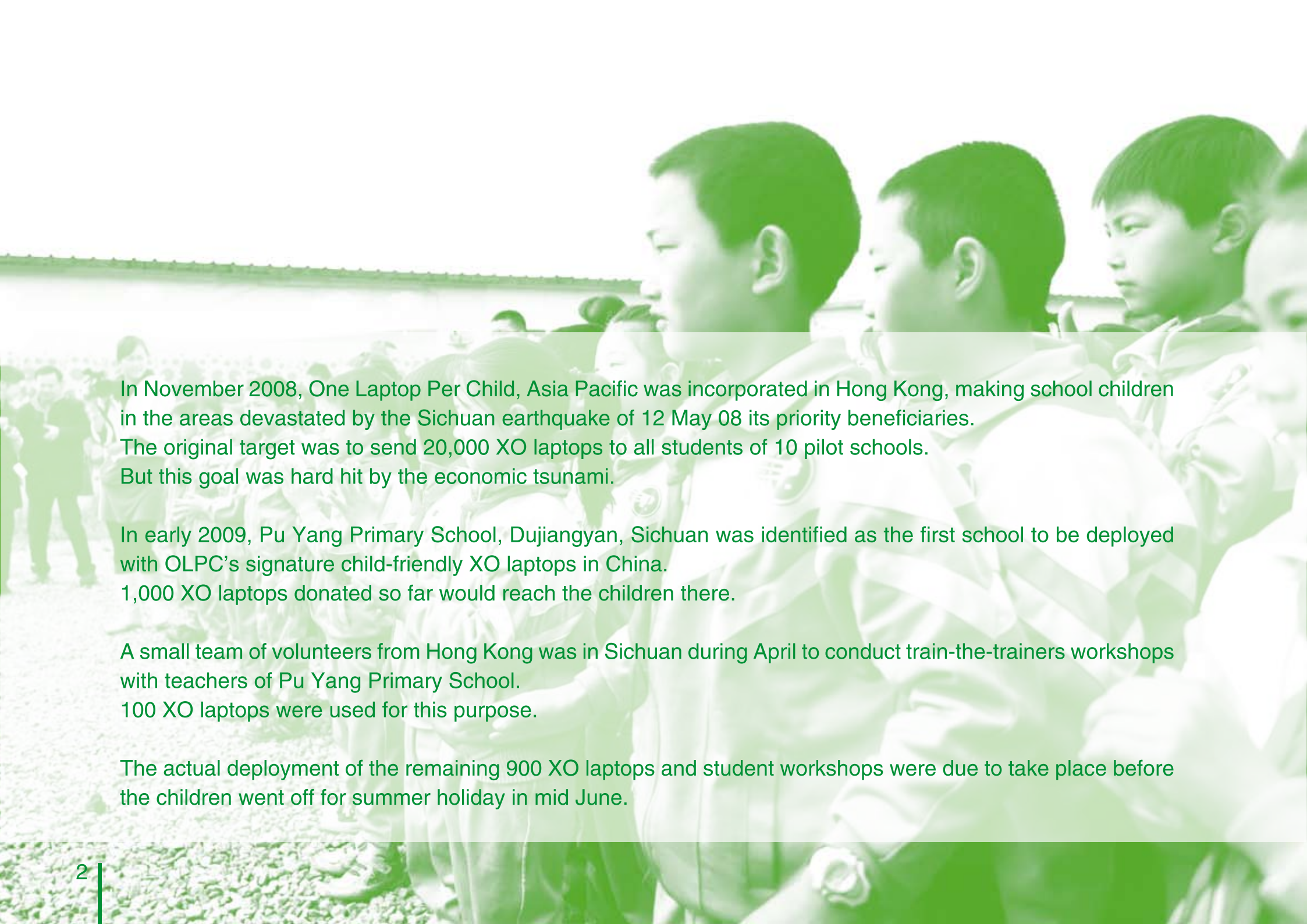


June 09
Dujiangyan, Sichuan
China

Once Upon A Time, One Laptop Per Child



A group of children in school uniforms are standing outdoors, looking towards the left. They are wearing light-colored shirts with dark collars and dark trousers. The background is slightly blurred, showing more children and a building.

In November 2008, One Laptop Per Child, Asia Pacific was incorporated in Hong Kong, making school children in the areas devastated by the Sichuan earthquake of 12 May 08 its priority beneficiaries. The original target was to send 20,000 XO laptops to all students of 10 pilot schools. But this goal was hard hit by the economic tsunami.

In early 2009, Pu Yang Primary School, Dujiangyan, Sichuan was identified as the first school to be deployed with OLPC's signature child-friendly XO laptops in China. 1,000 XO laptops donated so far would reach the children there.

A small team of volunteers from Hong Kong was in Sichuan during April to conduct train-the-trainers workshops with teachers of Pu Yang Primary School. 100 XO laptops were used for this purpose.

The actual deployment of the remaining 900 XO laptops and student workshops were due to take place before the children went off for summer holiday in mid June.

Will they arrive? Will they arrive in time?

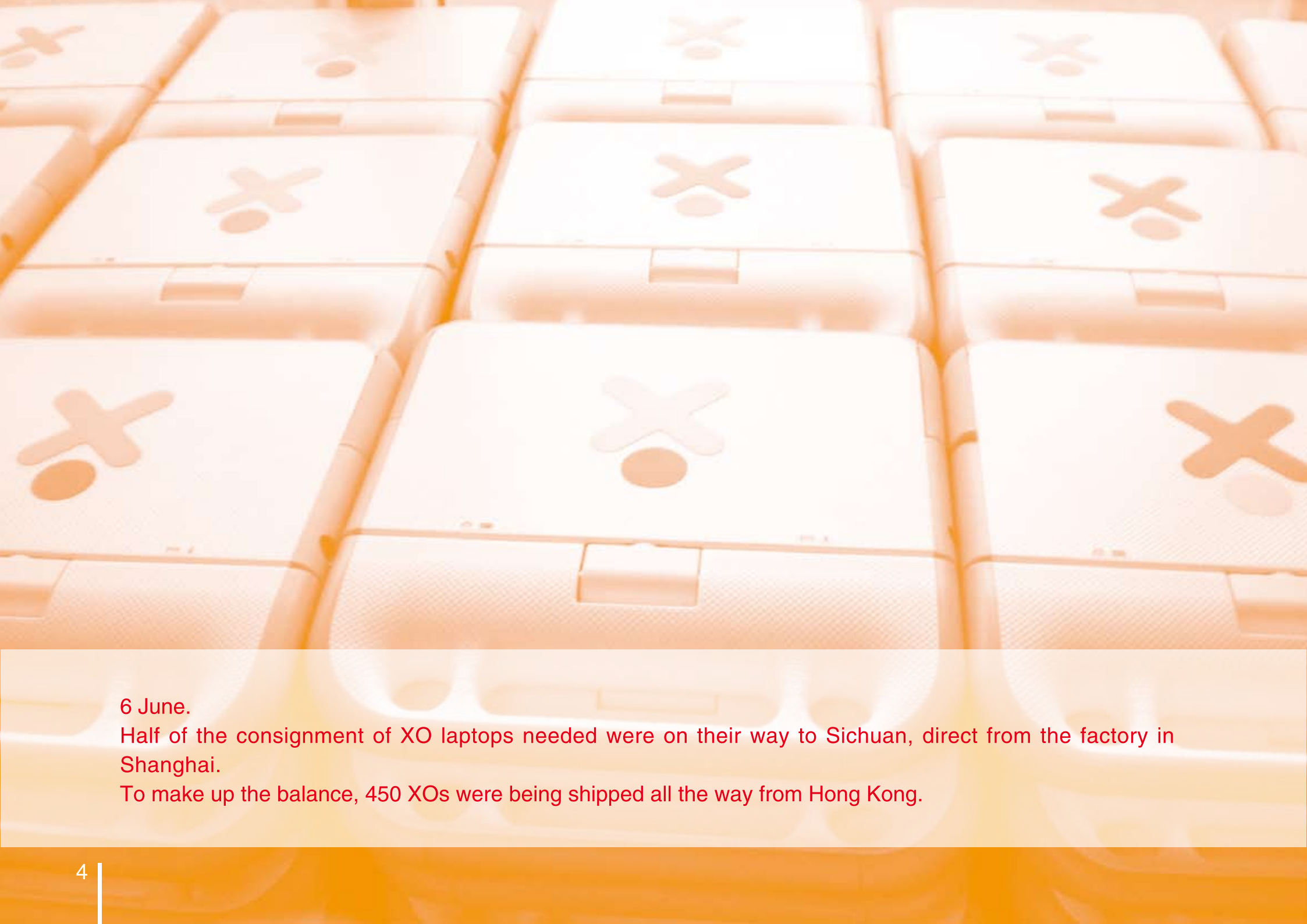
We kept asking ourselves these questions for the past week.
900 XO laptops were due to arrive in Dujiangyan, Sichuan in early June,
so that they can be placed in the hands of school children
of Pu Yang Primary School.

There is no greater wish from us all.
It is for the children to each have an XO laptop as their new friend and learning companion,
and for them to begin this amazing journey of a new friendship
as early as possible in the summer of 2009.

Summer in Sichuan is notoriously hot.
The uncertainty of the arrival of the XO laptops
heated and fueled our agitation.

So there will be Plans B, C and D maybe, if they do not arrive in time,
or in complete consignments.
We could always improvise.

This world of ours is never perfect.
We are all just doing our best to build little bridges as we make it from one valley to the next.



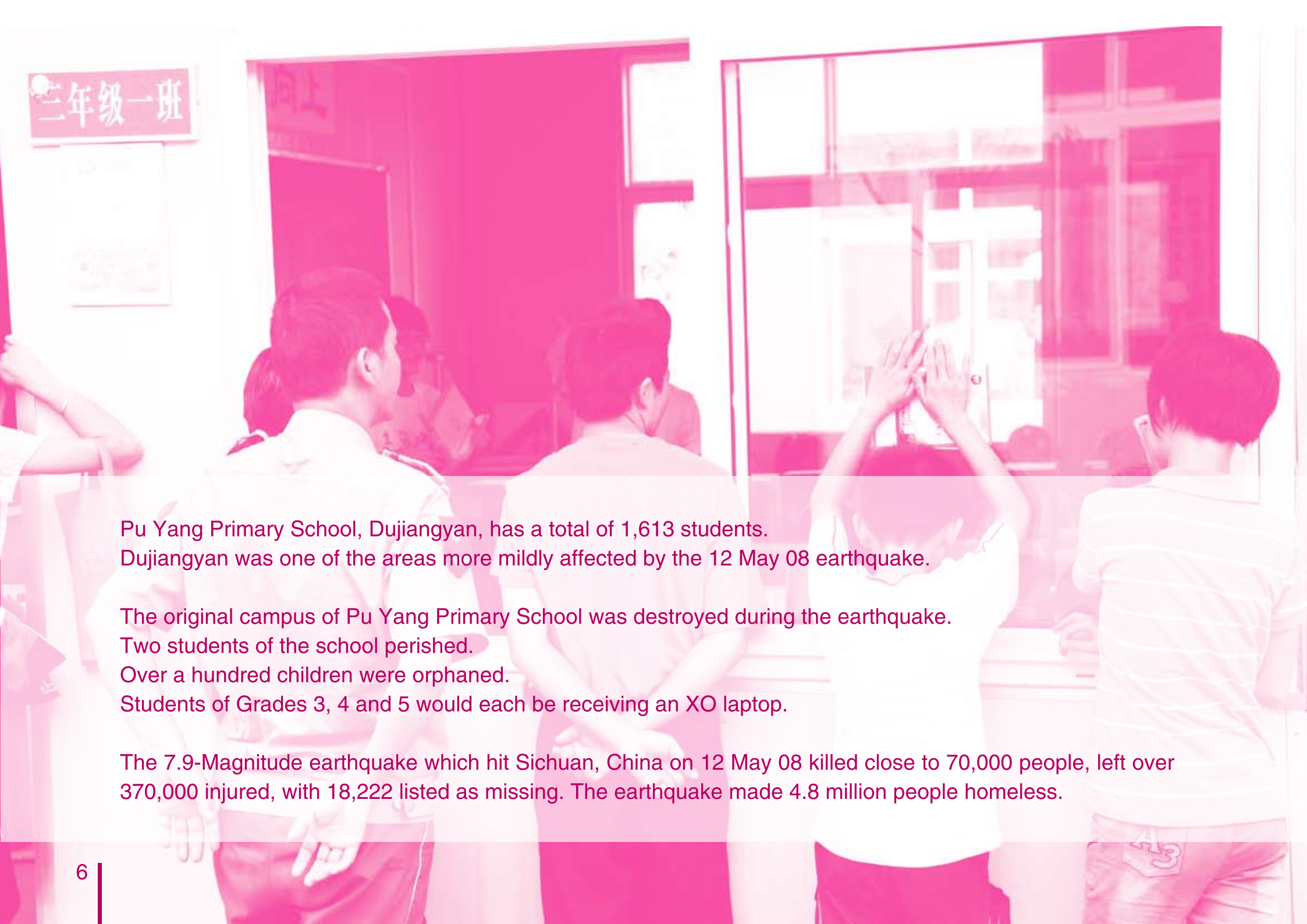
6 June.

Half of the consignment of XO laptops needed were on their way to Sichuan, direct from the factory in Shanghai.

To make up the balance, 450 XOs were being shipped all the way from Hong Kong.

450 XO laptops arrived today!
The same day that our team of volunteers from Hong Kong arrived in Sichuan.
We had no idea when the rest of the consignment will arrive to complete our deployment.

But we remained hopeful.



Pu Yang Primary School, Dujiangyan, has a total of 1,613 students.
Dujiangyan was one of the areas more mildly affected by the 12 May 08 earthquake.

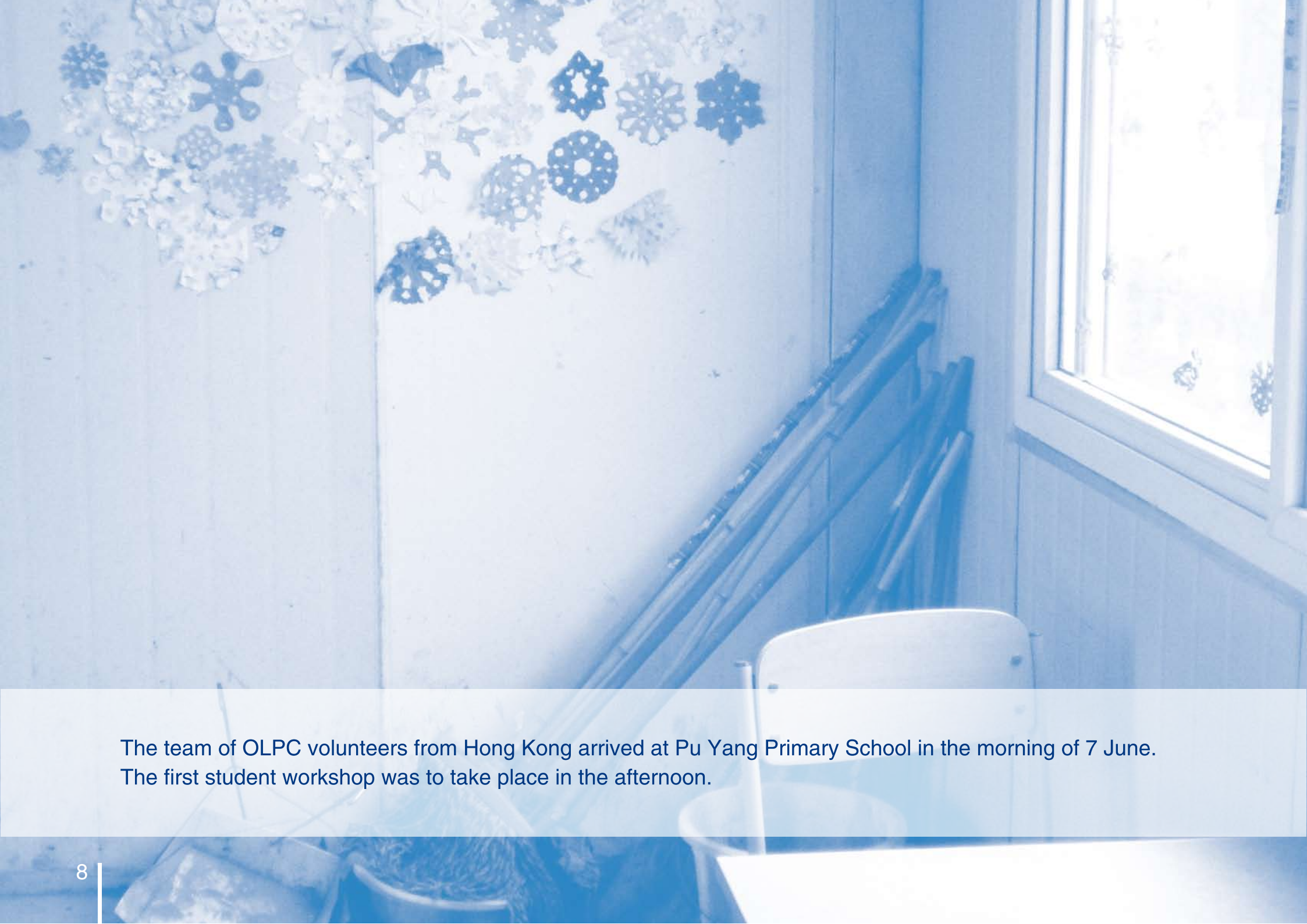
The original campus of Pu Yang Primary School was destroyed during the earthquake.
Two students of the school perished.
Over a hundred children were orphaned.
Students of Grades 3, 4 and 5 would each be receiving an XO laptop.

The 7.9-Magnitude earthquake which hit Sichuan, China on 12 May 08 killed close to 70,000 people, left over 370,000 injured, with 18,222 listed as missing. The earthquake made 4.8 million people homeless.

It was our last day in school, built of make-shift bungalows,
now a standard scene among places shattered by the massive earthquake.

Parents were eagerly waiting at the main gate for us to make our way out of the classrooms.
Some so impatient that they kept popping their heads through the flimsy windows and
open doors of the classrooms.

Finally it was time to go free! Summer holiday ahead!
And goodbye to our transition campus on dirt and gravel.
We are moving to a permanent campus in September when we start the school year anew.
We have so much to look forward to.

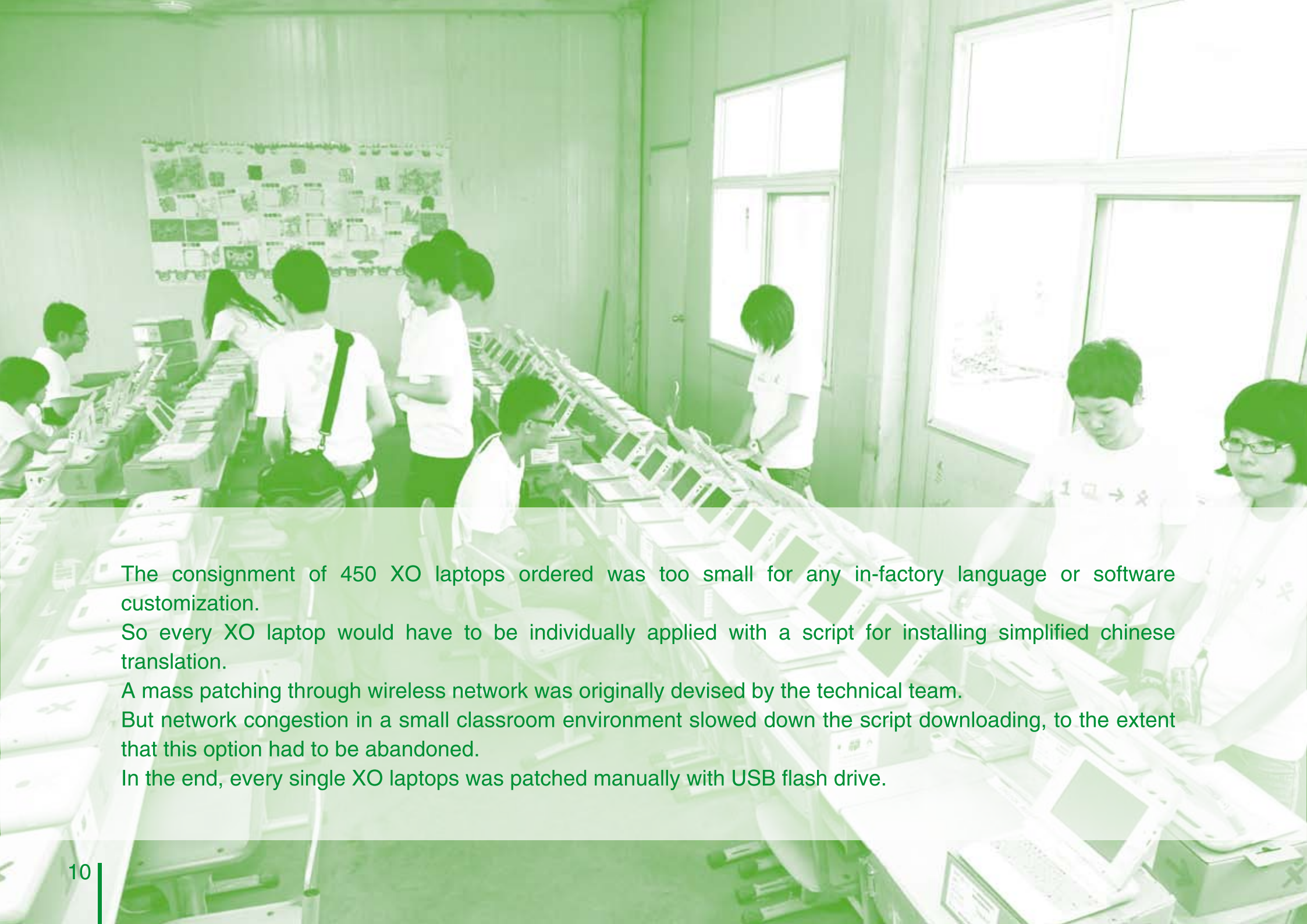


The team of OLPC volunteers from Hong Kong arrived at Pu Yang Primary School in the morning of 7 June. The first student workshop was to take place in the afternoon.

Classrooms emptied. Blackboards occupied with reminders about summer holiday assignments.
Here and there on little desks, copybooks were left open and forgotten.

The floor was littered with paper crumpled, and stubs of chalk, yellow, blue and pink.
Upon windows, stars and flowers bloomed quietly in all colours,
from paper cut by students and put against the light.
Drawings of children, fresh and brave, beamed at the playgrounds.

We are glad too that you are moving on, and have so much to look forward to.



The consignment of 450 XO laptops ordered was too small for any in-factory language or software customization.

So every XO laptop would have to be individually applied with a script for installing simplified chinese translation.

A mass patching through wireless network was originally devised by the technical team.

But network congestion in a small classroom environment slowed down the script downloading, to the extent that this option had to be abandoned.

In the end, every single XO laptops was patched manually with USB flash drive.

It was a blissfully cloudy afternoon.
But still, summer in Sichuan is infamous for its stifling heat.
Crammed in a small classroom with hundreds of XO laptops being flashed,
and waiting to be flashed.
In a minute, child, your turn soon.
The XOs were so much like children competing for attention. And sometimes unpredictable.

But there would always be our technical wizards, saving the day.
The air in the classroom bubbled with energy as all volunteers raced against time
to flash the XO laptops in time for the student workshops.

Finally, mission accomplished.
Eager children raced to the classrooms, now transformed into XO workshops.
So much to look forward to.



Over the course of three half-day sessions, students of Grades 3, 4 and 5 of Pu Yang Primary School took part in XO first encounter workshops conducted by volunteers from Hong Kong.

“Did you know that you’re going to meet a new friend today?”

“Now this new friend is a little shy.
You would have to figure out how to say your first hello.”

Children moved their magic fingers and
within seconds, opened up the XO laptops in front of each of them.
Little green antennae ears mushroomed over the entire classroom.
Bright eyes sparkled, waiting for the next challenge.

Actually the challenge was ours, the facilitators’, or rather the amateur trainers’.
There was simply too much eagerness to be fed,
and too many possibilities to be unleashed.

We just hoped that rather than being afraid of doing too little,
we had not imposed too much.
Children best learn by their own initiative,
and in togetherness,
driven by their natural instincts and curiosity to know.

All that is needed is an environment and platform to make this learning adventure possible.

Such is the belief fundamental to One Laptop Per Child.

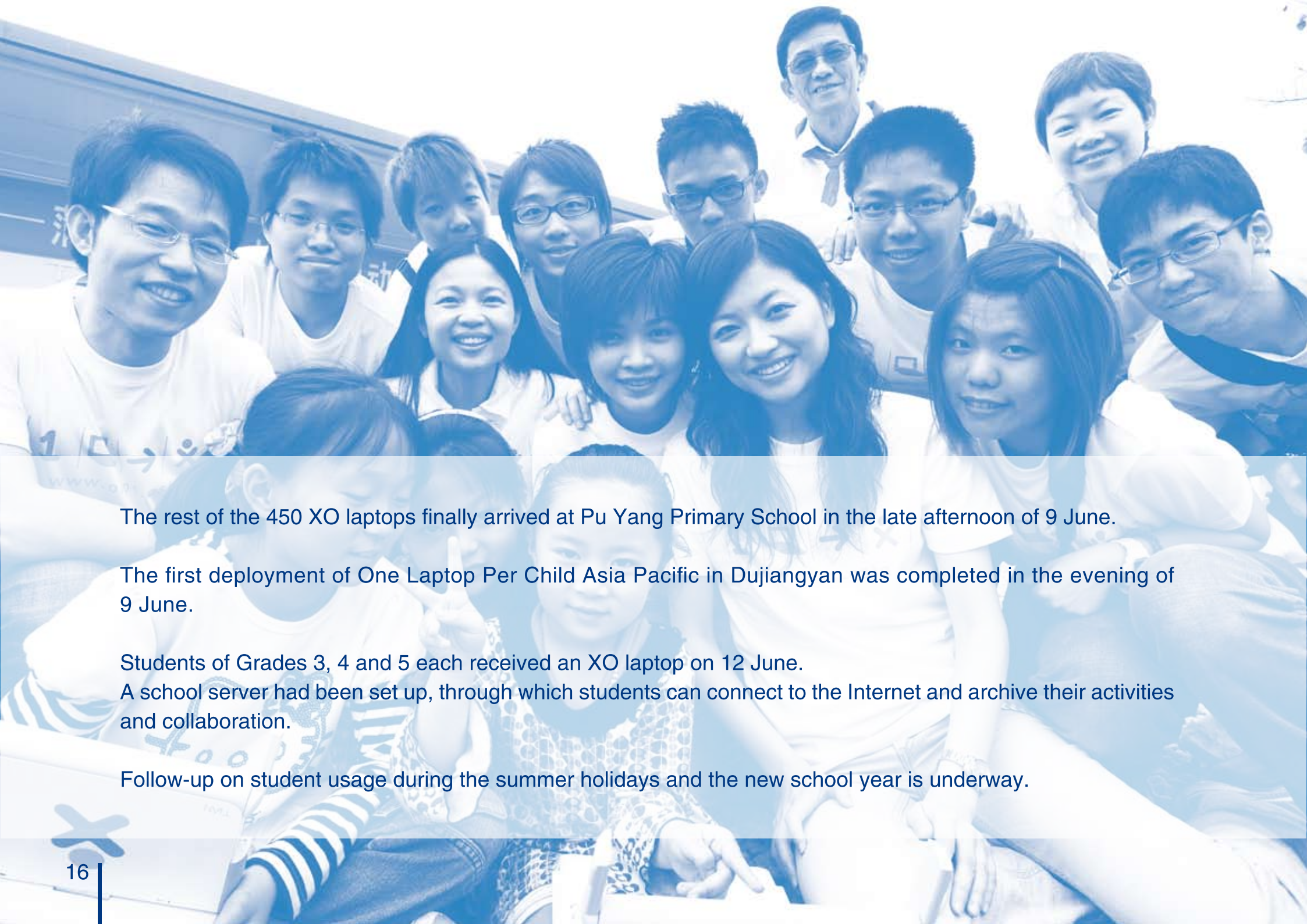


The official OLPC donation ceremony took place in the morning of 9 June, coinciding with the end-of-term assembly for Grades 3 and 4 students.

The gravel playground was filled with students in uniform.
Each with an XO on their laps, the children beamed with joy.
Then 10 young children filed in,
proudly presenting what they had done with their XOs to the officiating guests.
The youngest was 5 years old.
She was explaining to all the grown-ups the funny stories she had pulled out of Scratch,
the animation activity in XO.

It was a grand sight,
when all 400 children turned around and waved the XOs in their hands.

That's right, it is now in your hands.



The rest of the 450 XO laptops finally arrived at Pu Yang Primary School in the late afternoon of 9 June.

The first deployment of One Laptop Per Child Asia Pacific in Dujiangyan was completed in the evening of 9 June.

Students of Grades 3, 4 and 5 each received an XO laptop on 12 June.

A school server had been set up, through which students can connect to the Internet and archive their activities and collaboration.

Follow-up on student usage during the summer holidays and the new school year is underway.

It would probably be honest to say
that none of us had done so much manual labour in our lives.

Forming a human-chain conveyor belt and production line, we unloaded the 450 laptops from the truck,
unpacked and patched them individually.

Amazed at all the unique colour combinations on the cover of the XO laptops,
we wondered what kind of journey these XO laptops would each take the children.
Or rather, what kind of journey these children would each take, with their XO laptops,
being the unique individuals that they are.

It would be the beginning of a remarkable and colorful journey.



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